

June 6, 2006

The Honorable Kevin Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

I was pleased to hear that you are considering bringing the issue of digital must-carry before the Commission. I want you to know that we consider must-carry for the entire 6 MHz of spectrum to be essential to our ability to continue serving the people of Augusta with local news, local public service and local advertising.

Right now, WAGT-TV is making plans for the news and public affairs component on its CW franchise, scheduled to hit the air in September. We are absolutely committed to strong localism on that channel, just as we are on our NBC franchise. I was raised in this business believing that we operate to serve the public interest, convenience and necessity, which is what sets us apart from programming outlets that provide little or no weather emergency reporting and do not cover the difficult issues facing our communities.

Fulfilling this responsibility with our second and, potentially, our third channel is dependent on reaching the entire community. In the case of satellite providers who currently bring the NBC, CBS, ABC and Fox local stations into homes, there is an unwillingness to consider providing the CW local station, despite the fact that it will carry the most popular programs from the UPN and WB networks, and that it will carry local news and public service. One of the larger cable companies has taken the position that the CW channel should be available only to the 55% of its customers who have a digital box, frankly acknowledging that it needs to reclaim bandwidth for other business services and that it wants to use highly regarded channels such as CW to encourage customers to accept digital boxes. While I do hope to negotiate a satisfactory alternative to that position, it does show the need for digital multicast must-carry.

Keeping the balance between access to local information and free enterprise is a delicate undertaking. I hope that the Commission will see that, in this case, full must-carry for local broadcasters is the best way to keep localism in the pipeline for all viewers.

Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Marks
President and General Manager